The Juſtice and Neceſſity of the WAR with our AMERICAN COLONIES Examined.

A

SERMON,

Preached at INVERESK, December 12. 1776,

BEING

The FAST-DAY appointed by the KING, on account of The AMERICAN REBELLION.

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Miniſter of Inveresk, and Almoner to his Majeſty.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Sermon ſhould have been publiſhed ſome time ago, in deference to the requeſt of the hearers, had it not been for the author's reluctance to trouble the Public with his thoughts on a ſubject, that had ſo often employed much abler pens. He will be happy if his diſcourſe ſhall contribute in the leaſt to increaſe that great tide of national opinion, by which even Sovereigns and legiſlators muſt be carried along.

The juſtice and neceſſity of the War with our American Colonies, conſidered.

Shall I yet again go out to battle againſt the children of Benjamin my brother, or ſhall I ceaſe? Judges xx. 28.

THESE words are taken from the hiſtory of that war which the children of Iſrael carried on againſt the tribe of Benjamin, on account of an enormous act of cruelty and injuſtice done to a private perſon of Iſrael, by the men of Gibeah, a town of Benjamin. Compenſation for this injury was at firſt demanded; but it was refuſed with inſolence. War enſued; and the Iſraelites were defeated in two great battles, with the loſs of forty thouſand men. They had conſulted the Lord each time they had taken the field; but, for wiſe reaſons, only known to himſelf, he fought not on their ſide. The children of Iſrael, afflicted and diſmayed, and affraid that their ſins we

the ſecret cauſe of their diſcomfiture, kept a ſolemn faſt unto the Lord, 'and went up, 'and came unto the houſe of God, and wept, 'and there ſat before the Lord, and faſt-'ed that day until even, and offered burnt-'offerings, and peace-offerings before the 'Lord.' After this holy preparation, they a-gain inquired of the Lord, 'Shall I yet a-'gain go out to battle againſt the chil-'dren of Benjamin my brother, or ſhall 'I ceaſe?' The plain concluſion from this conduct of the Iſraelites is, That na-tions muſt perſevere with fortitude in a righ-teous cauſe, and continue to apply to God by prayer, and all the duties of religion, if they hope for ſucceſs in war.

On former occaſions, ſimilar to this, when we have been called upon, by our preſent Sovereign, to addreſs the King of Kings, for a bleſſing upon his counſels and arms, it has been on account of foreign wars, in which the ſafety or honour of the nation or its allies, have neceſſarily engaged us on the cleareſt grounds; and there is no need of ex-plaining them to you. The very laſt war was undertaken on ſuch grounds; for it was

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in defence of our ancient colonies, (now in arms againſt their protectors), who were then in danger of being ſubdued by the enemies of the Britiſh empire. You may remember with what zeal and affection you eſpouſed their cauſe, and what ſincere and fervent prayers you repeatedly offered up to heaven in their behalf, touched with the ſenſe of their calamities, and alarmed at their danger. How ſoon are things changed! and how great the change! Not long after the concluſion of that bloody and expenſive war, in recent remembrance, while that generation ſtill lives and flouriſhes which we ſaved from the foe, thoſe ungrateful colonies, by their foul revolt, have forced us into the muſt unnatural and dangerous war againſt themſelves. And, leſt your minds, my brethren, ſhould not be prepared to change as faſt as theirs, leſt the remains of your partial affection ſhould make you ſhut your eyes to the juſtice and neceſſity of this war, I think it incumbent on me, as a proper exerciſe for this day, to ſhew you the grounds *on which we are gone out*, and *ought again to go out againſt the children of Benjamin*,

Benjamin, our brother, and ſhould not ceaſe, that your prayers for ſucceſs to almighty God may be equally rational and fervent.

I ſhall, in the *1ſt* place, endeavour to ſhew the juſtice and neceſſity of this war. And then,

2dly, Point out our duty, in the preſent circumſtances, to God and to our country.

In the *1ſt* place, I am to ſhew the juſtice and neceſſity of this war.

But how ſhall I enter into ſo wide a field? or in what method ſhall I treat ſuch a copious ſubject? The ſketch I can now give you of it, muſt of neceſſity be ſhort: And I muſt truſt to your previous knowledge, to fill up and ſupply my brief and imperfect delineation.

Let us examine the grounds of this revolt, and try if we can find them in ancient right, or in recent provocation; or, if theſe ſhould fail, let us then ſee if expediency obliges, or the honour of the nation permits us, to yield to their demands.

The adventurers who firſt ſet out from Europe to the new diſcovered country of America, went all in ſearch of the pre-

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cious metals. Our coloniſts engaged in their enterprizes with the ſame view; and, when they were diſappointed, they changed their object for others more lucrative to themſelves, and to the mother-country. Diſcontent with the various forms of government, civil or eccleſiaſtical, that prevailed in their turns at home, during the laſt century, led many afterwards to ſeek for more peaceful abodes in that diſtant region. But, whatever were the objects of the firſt ſettlers of our American dominions, ſeparation from the government of Britain was none of them; for, to preſerve their connection with their native land, they went all under charters granted by the ſovereign of this country, with certain rights to the lands where they ſettled, and with the grant of certain powers defined by the charters, and to be adminiſtered in ſuch manner as they preſcribe. As corporations, they had rights given them to make bye-laws for themſelves; and, as corporations derived from, and ſubſiſting by higher authority, they continued ſubject to the controul of that authority. It is impoſſible, indeed,

indeed, to conceive any other idea of a corporation erected by charter, than that it ſhould continue ſubject to the author of that charter.

And if they, for their own intereſt, anxiouſly preſerved their connection with Britain, it was clearly her part to keep them in ſubjection and dependence. For what end did ſhe ſend out colonies, but to benefit herſelf, to extend her commerce and her power, to increaſe induſtry and population, and advance her happineſs and proſperity? Why ſhould ſhe have nouriſhed and protected them in their infancy, ſupplied them with the neceſſaries of life, and the means of improvement, if ſhe had not conſidered them as part of herſelf? Why ſhould ſhe have ſettled them once and again, when driven off by the natives, and encouraged and ſtrengthened them at great expence of blood and of treaſure, if not for her own common benefit and theirs? And why have the colonies, for almoſt two centuries, been ſuch favourite objects of her legiſlation? Thoſe who are acquainted with our body of laws,

laws, know well how great a part of it reſpects the colonies. Their affairs of government and commerce are ſo thoroughly incorporated with that code, that they could not be eraſed from it, without almoſt deſtroying the whole. This of itſelf ſufficiently ſhews how much their intereſt and ours have been blended together, and ſtrongly marks their dependence on the legiſlature of Great Britain.

On this ſubject, indeed, till of late years, there has been no diſpute. The coloniſts acknowledged the authority of the King and parliament, and ſubmitted to them on all occaſions. In return for their obedience, they claimed the protection of the ſtate, which was given them, with every mark of partiality and indulgence. And thus, with all the advantage of diſtant ſettlements for the improvement of their fortunes, they and their poſterity remained denizens of Great Britain, with the power of returning when prompted by inclination or wealth, and of enjoying the moſt ample privileges of native ſubjects. Antient right then furniſhes no ground for this revolt.

Let us next ſee if it can be juſtified by recent provocation.

You all know, my brethren, the neceſſity of taxes for the ſupport of the ſtate. As we give up part of our natural liberty, and ſubmit to be reſtrained by laws, that our perſons and property may be ſafe from the criminal invaſions of other men, we likewiſe yield part of our property to ſecure the reſt: That is, to pay the neceſſary expence of government and the execution of the laws; to ſupport the ſupreme magiſtrate and his judges and officers in ſuitable dignity, and to defray the expence of fleets and armies, for the common defence and protection of the whole. And, leſt the covetous ſhould with-hold his ſhare, the law forces it out of his hoard, that the reſt of his fellow-citizens may not pay more than their juſt proportion. By the happy conſtitution of our country, theſe taxes are not arbitrary demands, but laid on by the repreſentatives of the people, with the conſent of the houſe of Lords and the Sovereign; ſo that no nation was ever ſo well ſecured againſt an oppreſſive or unequal taxation.

To make it compleat, every perſon within our wide extended empire ſhould contribute according to his ability, otherwiſe the burden muſt fall unequally.

When the colonies were in their infant-ſtate, ſtruggling with difficulties and with enemies, they were not in a condition to contribute to the common charge. They needed bounties and rewards for their encouragement; and accordingly they received them from the parent-ſtate. But afterwards, as their commerce and wealth increaſed, they were ſometimes directly taxed, as well as the reſt of the Britiſh dominions, and that as early as the times of Cromwell and Charles the Second, and down to the period immediately previous to the diſpute. Theſe taxes, indeed, were laid on with a ſparing hand, becauſe the colonies had but lately emerged from infant-weakneſs: But the authority of the acts of parliament was never diſputed till now, and the taxes impoſed by them were paid when demanded.

But, if there had been no exerciſe of this right of the legiſlature, prior to our own days, the right muſt have remained entire, becauſe it is eſſential to government, founded in juſtice and equity, and in the law of nature and nations. The ſupreme power of the ſtate would, at any time, have been entitled to impoſe part of the public burden on our fellow-ſubjects in America, provided thoſe impoſitions were juſt and fair. For I do not contend for paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance to ſupreme authority: But then the only juſt ground of reſiſtance is the oppreſſive, tyrannical, or unconſtitutional exerciſe of that authority. *

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* The colonies pretended, at the beginning of the diſpute, that it was unconſtitutional to tax them, becauſe they were not repreſented in parliament, and a new diſtinction was formed, in their behalf, between the right of legiſlation and that of taxation. Conſuetude was ſufficient to obviate theſe objections. All the arguments in ſupport of them have, however, been again and again ably refuted, and particularly of late, in a ſermon on allegiance, by Dr Campbell Principal of the Mariſhall College, Aberdeen. See alſo the rights of Great Britain aſſerted, and an Enquiry into the guilt of the war, &c. by Dr Roebuck.

The Americans, however, do not plead that they were taxed beyond their proportion or ability: They abſolutely deny the right itſelf. This doctrine is entirely new, and is the undoubted offspring of their wealth and power. Let us trace the facts that apparently led them to take arms, as they riſe in their order.

After a war, undertaken, as I have ſaid, entirely on account of the colonies, which, though ſucceſsful beyond our moſt ſanguine wiſhes, was expenſive to the enormous extent of near one hundred millions; when, to leſſen this grievous burden in a ſmall degree, the ſtate laid on them an inconſiderable tax, the amount of which was to be applied to their own internal government, they would not ſubmit to it. Though they could neither juſtly complain of the quantity impoſed, nor of the application of the tax, nor plead their inability to bear it; for their trade and riches were greatly increaſed; yet they wantonly refuſed payment; and, without the leaſt provocation, riotouſly deſtroyed the property of fair merchants, to a great amount, that happened to

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be the ſubject of that taxation. Compenſation was demanded for this great injury to private proprietors, and ſatisfaction for ſuch a daring affront to the laws. Both were haughtily refuſed.

On the refuſal of ſatisfaction for their violation of private property, and outragious contempt of public authority, the legiſlature, equitable and ſteady, enacted laws to puniſh the offenders, and to enforce the authority of the ſtate. As it was impoſſible to bring the guilty to juſtice in common form, it became neceſſary to puniſh the community that ſcreened their crimes ; but the penalty was to ceaſe the moment they delivered up the offenders, and made compenſation. But the coloniſts made choice of the moſt violent part ; they obſtructed the execution of theſe laws, and an armed force became neceſſary, as in other caſes of reſiſtance againſt law. They attack the troops in the execution of their duty: Then, conſcious of the atrocious nature of their offence, or rather in the train of a concerted plan, they combine, from Dan to Beerſheba, from one extremity of the land to another. Truſting to

their diſtance from the parent-ſtate, and the ſtrength they had acquired under its genial wings, they overturn the antient chartered governments, and erect new ones in their place. They inflame the ignorant multitude. By ſeduction, or by force, they arm every man. They oppreſs his Majeſty's loyal ſubjects, and the beſt friends of the conſtitution, and drive them from their eſtates and poſſeſſions *. At laſt, after various ſubtile and artful profeſſions, they pull off the maſk; they declare themſelves an independent republic, make war upon the parent-ſtate, and implore the aid and protection of our antient foes, from whom we ſo lately delivered them.

Such is the recent provocation of which the colonies complain. Such rather are their pretences to juſtify the effects of their inſolence

* Their treatment of the epiſcopal clergy has been remarkably barbarous, and demonſtrates that, to be Whigs with them, men muſt be of the higheſt republican and antimonarchial principles The church of England ſupports the revolution on good grounds, and, in South Britain, is indiſputably the firmeſt barrier againſt fanaticiſm, either in religion or politics.

lence and pride. They excite the few by the proſpects of ambition: They intangle the many in the mazes of ſophiſtry. They dignify their own unreaſonable claims, lately propounded, by the name of ſacred rights, though hoſtile to the conſtitution. The mildeſt execution of the laws, they hold to be tyranny, and juſt puniſhment, or ſelf-defence, they exclaim againſt as the moſt barbarous murder. Though, in every reſpect, a part of our dominions, united to this government and ſubject to its laws, they aſſume the language of a ſeparate and independent ſtate, and thereupon form reaſons for actually becoming one; they rebel againſt lawful government, and, from the neceſſary conſequences of their own conduct, they form arguments to juſtify rebellion. But theſe colours are employed only to impoſe on and deceive the giddy multitude, who are not to be driven to arms without either real or imaginary oppreſſions. The project is of a more antient date, coeval with the century itſelf, with the dawn of their wealth and proſperity; and, when Canada yielded to the Britiſh arms, the long-wiſhed for proſpect at laſt aroſe on the cloudy imagination of the New-England fanatic, the flattering idea

idea of power and independency, and a glorious republic.

It is their ambition, then, that has led them into an unjuſt and unprovoked rebellion againſt the patent-ſtate. Let us now inquire, what motives may be derived from expediency to engage us to yield to their claims, or how far we can honourably agree to them.

From the ſhort repreſentation I have given of the caſe, you will obſerve, that this is a war merely in defence of our eſtabliſhed conſtitution and government, and the rights of the ſtate. On our part, it took its riſe from a legal attempt to enforce the laws, and preſerve their authority. And, though the legiſlative powers, in abhorrence of civil diſſention, were willing to depart from their juſt claims; yet their mild propoſitions were rejected with diſdain: And we are now involved in a war, (how tedious, expenſive, or bloody, God only knows), in defence of that conſtitution which was eſtabliſhed by the wiſdom, the courage, and fortitude of our forefathers, thoſe venerable anceſtors, who protected and cheriſhed, with ſo much care, the firſt

inhabitants

inhabitants of our plantations, and imparted to them that freedom which they had ſo nobly acquired.

Under this government, we have lived with more ſecurity and happineſs than any nation ever did. In their religion, all men have enjoyed an ample toleration; in their property, undiſturbed ſecurity; and, in their perſons, a liberty inviolate. Far ſuperior to the republics of antiquity, the government of Britain has maintained the rights of human nature, with a happy equality: And, while the multitude has been an object of her moſt tender care, the avenues of laudable ambition have been opened wide to talents and merit of every kind. Not only have we lived equal, and ſafe, and free, under the government of laws interpreted with equity and adminiſtred with moderation, but, in conſequence of this peculiar ſtate, we have attained to the higheſt degree of national felicity, proſperity, and glory.

Shall we then ſuffer the beſt of governments to be ſhaken to its centre, to be invaded, to be diſmembered, to be deſtroyed? No, ſurely; for, beſides that the dignity of

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the ſtate, makes it highly inexpedient to let rebellious ſubjects go unpuniſhed, our valuable intereſts, and the ſecurity of that conſtitution which we hold ſo dear, call upon us to go *out to battle againſt the children of Benjamin, our brother.* You will obſerve, that every argument which is uſed in behalf of the revolted Americans, except what ariſes from their diſtance alone, applies equally to many other parts of the Britiſh empire; and the views of their adherents on this ſide the Atlantic extend, if not to the entire deſtruction of this happy government, at leaſt to ſo new a model of it, as would not leave one ſtone upon another of the ancient and goodly fabric. Without upbraiding the coloniſts in this place, by obſerving, that the diſtance which they now alledge with ſo much arrogance againſt our interfering in their affairs, was not pleaded by us when of late they ſo humbly implored our protection, it is obvious, that, if the feet, becauſe they are more diſtant, ſhall be ſuffered to withdraw their ſubjection from the head, ſoon will the hands and arms and every mem-

ber of the body revolt, in their turn, againſt their guide and conductor.

But, ſay ſome, it is more expedient to yield even to their unreaſonable claims, than to engage in a war ſo expenſive, and ſo bloody, as this is likely to prove. The firſt counſels of prudence are not always wiſe, nor the firſt dictates of humanity always humane. Such counſellors do not conſider, that, by one great exertion to re-eſtabliſh the authority of the ſtate, we ſhall ſave millions that would be loſt in the violent disjunction of this mighty empire; that, by carrying on this great war with perſeverance and fortitude, we ſhall prevent innumerable and endleſs wars that might enſue; and that it is as juſt and neceſſary to ſhed our blood now, in reducing our ungrateful children to a ſenſe of their duty, as it was ſo lately to defend them againſt their foes.

Nor is it *our* intereſt alone that obliges us to reject their demands, but *their* intereſt alſo. Now, indeed, they are deluded by ſubtle leaders, ambitious of pre-eminence and power, who have known by what arts to inflame the people, even to madneſs: Yet they

they very lately confeſſed, that, under this government againſt which they revolt, they have been free and happy, and have grown to that height of wealth and population which, we ſay, has made them forget or deſpiſe all obligation, and aſpire at independency. What region of the world indeed could boaſt of greater felicity? They enjoyed unbounded liberty of conſcience, and civil liberty in perfection; they were governed by their own laws, that partake of the ſame líberal ſpirit with ours; they poſſeſſed a fertile country, and a flouriſhing trade; they paid next to no taxes*; and, in exchange for their ſubjection to the ſovereignty of Britain, provincial animoſity and rivalſhip was kept within bounds by her controlling power, and foreign hoſtility was warded off by her fleets and armies. In ſhort, the ſtate of mankind was ſo happy and ſo inviting in that diſtant region, that the mother-country was in danger of being depopulated by the paſſion with which men were

* Not above the 50th part of what is paid by every perſon in Britain.

were ſeized to go, in queſt of proſperity, to that fortunate and favourite clime. While we languiſhed under a heavy debt, contracted on their behalf, they were flouriſhing in commerce, and increaſing in numbers, from the happy effects of that war which coſt us ſo dear: And the compariſon with their ſtate made ours ſeem the more grievous. And yet they at once darken the glory of this golden age by their own perverſity: For, when we call upon them, in the fullneſs of their opulence, to pay a ſmall proportion of the expence of government, they reſiſt the law that impoſes it, and fly to arms. The annals of mankind do not contain a more unprovoked or inexcuſable revolt.

Let them not add falſehood to rebellion! Let them not ſay, that we are the aggreſſors! The Britiſh parliament had enacted laws that bound the colonies, from their firſt eſtabliſhment. By their charters they were ſubjected to taxes, and they had been frequently taxed by acts of parliament. Was it a juſt ground of reſiſtance to law, that we did not yield at once to their new requeſt to be exempted from taxes? Was it

a foundation for a civil war, after we had put them in a proſperous ſtate, that they were jealous leſt we ſhould one day lay heavier taxes upon them? This might have been the ſubject of proper repreſentations, and of new plans offered to the ſtate; but ſurely no juſt cauſe of war. For what government can give up the antient and eſtabliſhed mode of raiſing a revenue, till a new and better method is ſubſtituted in its ſtead?

I ſaid, that it was for *their* intereſt *, no leſs than ours, that we ſhould reduce the plantations again under the legal government

* It has been often ſaid in private converſation, That, whatever we may think as Britons, yet ſurely, were we Americans, we would think and act as they do; and I have often heard it raſhly anſwered in the affirmative. I call it raſhly; for, beſides all the ties which ought to bind the people of that country to this ſtate, from allegiance, affection, or gratitude, as the object of all government is the happineſs of the people, a wiſe and good man would deliberate maturely, before he would agree to a change that might, in place of certain freedom and proſperity, introduce the moſt uncertain effects, perhaps ſlavery and the worſt of all governments.

ment of Great Britain; for, beſides the relief that may be juſtly expected by his Majeſty's loyal and ſuffering ſubjects, who have been expelled in great numbers from their homes, and robbed of their property, who can foreſee, ſuppoſing the revolted colonies to prove ſucceſsful in their attempt to become independent of the parent ſtate, under what form of government they may fall, into what diviſions they may be broken, to what foreign yokes ſome of them may yield, or what ſpecies of deſpotiſm may ariſe among them? When the branches fall off from a mighty tree, not only are they deprived of the principle of life that made them flouriſh, but the bond that united them together is diſſolved. But, on the ſuppoſition that they ſhall remain in union, in caſe of ſucceſs, and form one great independent ſtate, muſt not that ſtate be the rival of Great Britain? and would ſhe not ſoon ſubdue our remaining provinces on the continent, and make herſelf miſtreſs of all our iſlands in the weſt Indies, whence we derive ſo much wealth and power? Would not all the arts follow the riſing

Empire,

Empire, and Britain be left a gloomy and deſolate iſle, to furniſh new abodes for the Danes and Normans of a future age? May heaven avert ſo great a calamity! I love my country, I revere her conſtitution. No form of government ever diffuſed ſuch equal happineſs over the human race. And ſhall I ſee that ſacred temple of liberty reduced to ruins, on the uncertain project of rearing an Utopia in a diſtant land? Religion and reaſon, as well as every feeling of a Britiſh heart, forbid me to behold ſuch a proſpect without grief and indignation. *If I forget thee, O! Jeruſalem, Let my right hand forget its cunning: If I do not remember thee, Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.* Pſal. cxxxi. 5. 6.

To yield to the unreaſonable demands of our colonies, would be no leſs diſhonourable, than it is highly inexpedient.

The proſperity of nations depends, under God, in a great meaſure, on the credit they maintain with their neighbours around them, on their reputation for wiſdom and arms. Such as are ill able to defend themſelves, if they have acquired wealth, are ſo much the more

more a tempting prey to braver and more warlike nations. It is imprudent to rely entirely on the law of nations, or on the faith of treaties: To be ſafe, or to preſerve peace, a people muſt be ſtrong; for a name in arms is the moſt formidable of all barriers. How muſt we ſink, then, in the eyes of all Europe, if we ſuffer our laurels to be torn by our own degenerate and rebellious ſons, whom we have long foſtered with ſo much care?

Twenty years are hardly elapſed, ſince (might we believe their loud ſupplications) they were in the utmoſt danger from their neighbouring colony of Canada. To have liſtened to them, one would have believed, that fifty thouſand Canadians were enough to have driven no leſs than two millions of Britiſh Americans, that is, forty times their own number, from their abodes and poſſeſſions, from their cities and their havens, and overwhelmed them in the Atlantic ocean. On their alarms and complaints, we engaged in that moſt expenſive war. They had not then rouſed their warlike ſpirit; they reſerved it for rebellion; but retired behind the

ſhield

ſhield of Britain;. and it was owing to their unmanly countenance and feeble defence, that the enemy gained ſo much ground, as made it difficult to expel him. At length he was expelled from our dominions; and, to deſtroy the very root of fear in time coming, all the colonies of the enemy on that continent were ſubdued, and, at the peace, more important conqueſts were ceded, to retain the former as provinces to the parent-ſtate. What return have we received for placing them in a ſtate of perfect ſecurity? They have become proud, and turned againſt their deliverers. The indignant ſpirit of the nation muſt riſe on the baſeneſs of their conduct; and the recentneſs of the benefit heightens the guilt of their ingratitude *.

* It may be ſaid, that gratitude is not a virtue to be expected from one nation to another: But that I deny; for, though it is not wiſe always to truſt to the good faith of nations, becauſe their governors may be prefidious, yet, without juſtice, and good faith, and gratitude, all the great ſocieties of men would be no better than robbers or banditti. Beſides, the Americans are not another nation, (on which ſuppoſition, there has been much falſe reaſoning), but a part of Britain, united to it by every tye.

To ingratitude they have added the moſt falſe and inſidious arts. At firſt they make the moſt ample declarations of duty and allegiance to the King: They profeſs the warmeſt deſire of preſerving their connection with this government: They diſclaim all pretenſions to independency: They affect to lay themſelves at the foot of the throne, imploring deliverance from the thraldom of parliament: And, ſtrange to tell, are deſirous of ſubmitting to the will of one man, in order to be freed from the government of laws. But, when our Sovereign, like a true friend of liberty, refers their complaints to the great council of the nation, this wiſdom and virtue diſguſt their poiſoned minds, and they ſpurn at that royal authority which they pretend to revere. They frame falſe and inſidious addreſſes to the neighbouring colonies, whom, for their loyalty, they had juſt now treated with the utmoſt contempt. They even attempt to miſlead the inhabitants of theſe iſlands. They endeavour to ſhake our allegiance to the King, and to deſtroy our reverence for the conſtitution. They try to pervert our underſtandings, to ſeduce our wills into revolt. They would convince us, that

deſpotiſm

deſpotiſm is eſtabliſhed, while we feel that we are governed only by laws: And that we are a wretched nation of ſlaves, while we enjoy perfect freedom under the mildeſt adminiſtration. And, to crown all their inſults on our underſtandings, they at laſt break out with their declaration of independency, their firſt and darling object, which they concealed ſo long under a cloud of grievances and fears. Turning their averſion and malice from the parliament on the King, they repreſent our mild and gracious Sovereign, who reveres the laws, and ſupports the conſtitution, as the moſt cruel, vindictive, and deſpotic tyrant.

But why need I enumerate their miſdeeds? After the moſt violent outrage on private property, the moſt haughty refuſal of ſatisfaction when demanded, and the moſt daring reſiſtance to the execution of the laws, they have reſorted to open rebellion to juſtify their conduct. They are in arms againſt their country. They have muſtered a force which they deem invincible: Their ſhips of war cover the ocean: Their hoſts of armed men croud the ſhore of the vaſt Atlantic.

They

They lift themſelves up againſt that paternal arm which ſo long cheriſhed and protected them: They would ſheath the ſword in thoſe bowels from whence they ſprung. Liberty was but a pretence, for they were always free; independence was their aim. They complained of grievances that did not exiſt, and muſtered up phantoms of ideal apprehenſions, that, under the colours of paſt or preſent oppreſſion, and jealouſy of the future, they might raiſe ſuch a power as would cancel thoſe obligations they were unwilling to repay.

Who then can doubt for a moment on whom to lay the guilt of this war? The faithful magiſtrate who ſtops his ear to the criminal's deſire to eſcape from juſtice, or the kind parent who does not yield to the unreaſonable demands of a froward child, may as well be accuſed as Great Britain on this occaſion. The very name of Brethren, by which, with all the ties that it implies, we have ſo often been obteſted to deſiſt from this cruel and unnatural war, demonſtrates the juſtice and neceſſity of it on our part, ſince it points out their connection with us, marks their dependence and obligations,

and

and aggravates the treachery and violence of their conduct. Theſe unſteady meaſures with which they have upbraided us; that lenity which they have conſtrued into incapacity to govern; that reluctance to puniſh, which they held to be weakneſs and fear; now that, from ſeditious ſubjects, they have become open enemies, are ſo many incitements to us, to act with unanimity and vigor.

Let us, then, no longer heſitate, *Whether we ſhall go out to battle againſt the children of Benjamin our Brother, or ſhall ceaſe.* The oracle of reaſon (and the ſacred oracles ſupport it) obliges us to conclude, that it is moſt expedient and honourable, as well as juſt and neceſſary for the ſtate, our common parent, to bring back by force this favourite and froward child, made rebellious by indulgence, to a juſt ſenſe of his duty, and to the happineſs he ſo long enjoyed in his father's houſe.

I come now, in the *ſecond* place, as I propoſed, to point out our duty, in the preſent circumſtances, to God and to our country.

And

And here, without queſtion, we ought, in the firſt place, to confeſs and lament our ſins, and to turn to God and our duty. For, though we cannot be accuſed of any guilt in reſpect of the immediate occaſions or grounds of this war, yet, as they lie in the order of Providence, I am afraid we cannot clear ourſelves of blame.

From the beginning of the world unto this day, ſin has occaſioned the downfall of nations and of kingdoms. Infidelity and irreligion, neglect of God and of his worſhip, and the moſt licentious morals, as they are intimately connected together, ſo have they generally preceded the declenſion and fall of ſtates. And who can deny, that theſe *are the ſigns of the times?* that theſe are the ſtrong features of iniquity which mark the preſent age?

If men retain ſound principles, however much they may ſometimes depart from them in practice, *being led away by temptation and the error of the wicked*; yet there is hope that they may one day return to their duty, becauſe a ſlumbering conſcience may ſtill awaken, and dying principles again revive.

But

But what can be expected, when there is a profeſſed diſbelief of all moral diſtinctions, when truth, and juſtice, and honeſty, and the love of our country, and indeed every principle but daring ambition and vile ſelf-intereſt. are ridiculed, deſpiſed, and exploded? While the inferior ranks of men are corrupted, by the deſire of gain or pleaſure, into fraud or profligacy of manners, the ſuperior ranks fall ſacrifices to luxury and effeminacy. Inſtead of the manly purſuits that would lead them to acquire ſuch talents and qualities, as might enable them to adorn and defend their country, and ſtrengthen her conſtitution, they waſte their health and fortunes in everlaſting gaming and voluptuouſneſs, and in all the modes of living that debaſe or debilitate the mind, no leſs than the body. I ſpeak only of the many; for, God be praiſed, we have ſtill ſome in the higher ranks of life, who would do honour to the moſt virtuous age: We have ſtill ſome, who, in ſpite of the infection of the times, think it glorious to lead or to join the fleets and armies of their country, and are now expoſing their lives

in

in defence of that conſtitution, which, of old, was the nurſe of patriots and heroes.

But, when we conſider our ſad degeneracy, upon the whole, muſt we not confeſs, that *we are a ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers*, Iſai. i. 4. &c. and may we not ſtand juſtly amazed to conſider, *that even the God of all patience* ſhould have born with us ſo long, and ſuffered our profligate manners? When we reflect on the high degree of proſperity and glory to which this nation was raiſed in the laſt war, by the hand of the God of battles, and conſider our own dreadful ingratitude, by the ſad abuſe of our great and ſingular privileges; have we not juſt reaſon to fear that God is now ſaying to us, as he ſaid formerly to the Jews, *Shall I not viſit, for theſe things, ſaith the Lord? and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this?*

What then can be more proper, on ſuch a day as this, than to deprecate God's diſpleaſure, and join in humble ſupplications to him, that he would be pleaſed to avert thoſe dreadful judgments that hang over us, and which we have ſuch juſt cauſe to fear may fall

upon

upon us! What can we do, but every one of us this day commence a thorough reformation of thoſe particular vices and crimes, which, though ſmall in our eyes, accumulate the mighty ſum of national guilt? And let us join the holy prophets of Iſrael, who, on their ſolemn days of faſting and prayer, beſought God to remove his judgments, and turn away his anger from them: And, particularly, let us join with the prophet Daniel, when he thus addreſſes the almighty, Dan. ix. 16. &c. *O! Lord, according to all thy righteouſneſs, I beſeech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jeruſalem, thy holy mountain: becauſe, for our ſins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jeruſalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us*, &c.

I have mentioned in general that torrent of corruption which overwhelms this nation, and may be the cauſe (as it has been in other ages and regions of the world), why God ſhould now viſit us with ſore calamities. But this obſervation applies to other nations as well as to us. Let us try if we can point out ſome particular grounds of fear, which are more peculiarly applicable to our own country, that we may lament and

correct them as far as we can. For, though the plans and conduct of providence are laid deep, and are carried on in ſilence and darkneſs, yet the moral cauſes that undermine the greatneſs of nations, may ſometimes be traced. Allow me to mention a few that ſeem to me to have been immediately productive of our preſent danger.

The *1ſt* I ſhall mention is unbounded ambition, and national pride.

In the late war, which was undertaken in defence of the colonies, though we were at firſt unſucceſsful; yet the ſpirit of the nation being rouſed at laſt, and well conducted, we were victorious in every quarter of the globe, and left not our enemies a ſingle province or iſland that could be the ſubject of conteſt. When the negociations for peace were entered upon, you may remember how difficult it was for his Majeſty's prudent and moderate miniſters to frame ſuch a peace as would pleaſe the people; and, after it was made, there aroſe a ſtorm of violence and clamour that has hardly ſubſided to this day. Nothing leſs would ſatisfy the national pride and ambition, than the retaining all the conqueſts their arms had made. Time and experience

experience have ſhewn the truth of what ſome then boldly averred, that we kept by far too many of our conqueſts; enow indeed to threaten perpetual commotions, if not downfal to the ſtate. To the retaining of Canada for the ſecurity of the Americans, it is entirely owing that they have become ſo inſolent as to rebel againſt the parent-ſtate. And, in ſo great and unwieldy an empire, we may expect convulſions every day.

The great object of a free ſtate ought to be to perpetuate its liberty; and no temptation of wealth or of power ſhould ever ſeduce ſuch a ſtate into a conduct that may prove fatal to its chief object. Hiſtory proves, that great conqueſts have always been ruinous to free governments: And ſimilar cauſes will operate ſimilar effects to the end of the world. Such dominions are too unwieldy to be governed. If they conſiſt of fertile regions, in climes favourable to human nature, they are in danger of depopulating the mother-country: If they are barren and unhoſpitable deſerts, they are not worth the expence of retaining them.

Europe, for ſome centuries paſt, has been the moſt flouriſhing quarter of the world.

The

The governments of it, though various, have been balanced by each other; and the people in general have been happy even under the moſt deſpotic forms it contains, becauſe the views and conduct of princes have been moderated by their mutual jealouſies. Was it for us, who had exclaimed ſo loudly againſt univerſal monarchy, and had laid out ſo much blood and treaſure to oppoſe thoſe ambitious powers, who, at different periods, were ſuppoſed to have conceived the idea, was it for us to extend our dominions from pole to pole, and to all the ſhores that are waſhed by the Indian or Atlantic oceans? Was it wiſe in a free ſtate to raiſe ſuch a jealouſy in other ſtates, as would produce a combination againſt us, which might one day prove our ruin, whether we conquer or are conquered? For, in the firſt caſe, we ſhould certainly periſh by our own corruption, as, in the ſecond, by the power of the enemy.

To this cauſe is probably owing that weakneſs of government, which has been of late ſo much felt and complained of, and which no capacity ſeems hitherto able to repair.

repair. I mean, the machine of government itſelf, (not the adminiſtration of it), which has loſt much of the ſpring and energy it had in former times; witneſs the infamous abuſe that has been ſuffered, the dangerous tumults that have paſſed unpuniſhed, and the relaxation of the executive power, even in reſpect of crimes againſt itſelf. In vain has oppoſition, with her warning voice, and faction, with her clamorous tongue, aſcribed this imbecillity to the hands who direct the machine; for the chiefs of every party in the ſtate have directed, in their turns, with no better ſucceſs. And no wonder that it is ſo; for the internal force that was ſufficient to move thoſe wheels of government, which ſo long guided theſe happy iſlands, and their ancient colonies, could not fail to prove too weak, when loaded with new conqueſts, diſtant as the extremities of the globe, and larger than all our former dominions. Such are the effects of unbounded pride and ambition: And ſuch are the rebukes which the wiſe providence of God has contrived for the haughtineſs of man.

In

In the 2*d* place, Let me mention, as one of the more immediate cauſes of our preſent danger, that unbounded licentiouſneſs, which, for a long time, has prevailed in writing and diſcourſe.

The liberty of the preſs is indeed a moſt ſacred right of Britiſh freedom; but, like all other privileges, it may be abuſed, and, and when it is, may be productive of the moſt pernicious conſequences. No character has been ſacred enough to be ſafe from the torrent of calumny and reproach, which, for ſome time paſt, has poured itſelf upon the public ear. The moſt private aſylum of domeſtic peace has not been ſecure againſt that malignant poiſon that glides in every breath, and is ſcattered about on every page. The throne has been openly attacked; and not only have the meaſures of government been arraigned, as in former times, but the legiſlature itſelf has been ridiculed, traduced, and almoſt libelled in its own hearing. And what is the conſequence of this vile licentiouſneſs? Has the tongue of ſedition, and the pen of faction proceeded to ſuch outrage, that they are now no

longer

longer believed? That may be true with reſpect to the characters of individuals; but we may reſt aſſured, that the unbounded freedom which has been uſed has leſſened the reſpect due to the Soveregin; has deſtroyed that reverence in which the legiſlature ſhould be held; and, while it has overawed the magiſtrate in the execution of his office, it has, at the ſame time, impaired the dignity and weakened the force of the laws themſelves. We may be certain, that this rampant licentiouſneſs has overturned all ideas of ſubordination, which is the bond that holds men in ſociety together, and prepared their minds to meet, without concern, if not to wiſh for, a revolution of government.

How can we otherwiſe account for the publications that have proceeded from men of gravity, of profeſſedly good intentions, and of no mean talents *? With what other view, than to a revolution, have thoſe elaborate treatiſes been compoſed; or what other can be the aim of their authors, who, amidſt pro-

* See the works of the Reverend Dr Price, and others.

profeſſions of allegiance too, take ſo much pains to decry the preſent government of Britain, and to preſent us with an idea of ſomething infinitely more perfect, which we are ſoon to ſee eſtabliſhed in America, and which they ſeem to wiſh, and hope may likewiſe take place at home? But a republic of ſuch unbounded extent, as that of America would prove, is an experiment that remains to be tried in the hiſtory of the world. We know that our anceſtors tried it in vain, within far narrower limits. They, too, had great expectations of that perfection to which human government was going to arrive: They believed that a millennium, and the kingdom of the ſaints, was at hand: But they were ſadly deceived; for they found, in their ſtead, the iron ſceptre of an uſurper, ſupported by military force.

There is a line ſomewhere between the liberty of the preſs, and that licentiouſneſs which would ſubvert the very government which ſupports the liberty of the preſs. When the times are calm, that line will be found out and applied.

Allow

Allow me to mention, as one other more immediate cauſe of the preſent danger, in the 3*d* place, The murders, and rapines, and enormities that have been committed in various places of the Britiſh empire, and ſtill remain unaccounted for, unpuniſhed, and unarraigned.

Beſides, that ſuch inſtances of impunity to great crimes, demonſtrate the weakneſs of the executive power, and tend to increaſe corruption, making men more daring and obſtinate by their pernicious example, they likewiſe continue to cry to almighty God for vengeance: *For blood muſt have blood.* And who can ſay that the God of heaven is not now ſtretching out his arm to recompenſe thoſe nations who have that guilt ſtill hanging on their heads? The Indian tribes of America have almoſt entirely vaniſhed, through the treachery or cruelty of the new poſſeſſors. Thoſe very colonies, who plead ſo high for liberty, and alledge that they have taken up the ſword only in its defence, under pretence of driving out the heathen, (a pretence in Chriſtians no leſs impious than it is bloody,) by barbarous

policy, or by force, have almoſt wholly eradicated the ancient inhabitants of thoſe regions; while they hold thouſands and ten thouſands of wretched Africans under a cruel bondage, from which the moſt painful death would be a joyful deliverance.

Can we believe, that deeds have been committed in another quarter of the globe, by natives of theſe iſlands, that will make the odious names of Cortes and Pizarro be forgotten, and ſtain the Britiſh annals to the lateſt poſterity? In times of ignorance and bigotry, the minds of men have been known to run a career of enthuſiaſtic fury that aſtoniſhed themſelves when they became cool; and ſtern war is an apology for the moſt atrocious actions. But, in a period enlightened like the preſent, in profound peace, amidſt intercourſes of mutual confidence, and the mild operations of commerce, to ſurpaſs all former ages in perfidious barbarity! Ah! Curſed thirſt of gold! thou canſt transform man, even when refined and civilized, into a furious beaſt of prey!

Nor can we, as a nation, clear ourſelves of the guilt of theſe great crimes, if we have

ſuffered

ſuffered thoſe under our controul to commit them with impunity: Or if, after making extenſive conqueſts, we have robbed innocent and defenceleſs nations of the benefit and protection of their ancient governments, without eſtabliſhing new ones in their ſtead: Thus leaving them an eaſy and a tempting prey to avarice and cruelty. The *bloody and deceitful man, the vengeance of God will ſurely overtake.*

But, in the midſt of all our ſubjects of confeſſion and ſorrow and lamentation, whether of a private or public nature, and with a firm reſolution to contribute all in our power to correct what is amiſs, and to do our utmoſt for the national welfare, by carefully keeping every man of us *from his iniquity, now that the Hoſt has gone forth againſt the enemy*, we ſhall do well alſo to turn our thoughts on the peculiar and ſeaſonable bleſſings which the Almighty has poured down upon us, leſt, if we ſhould fail to mark them, or prove ungrateful for them, he may turn a deaf ear to our ſupplications for farther mercies.

Among

Among ſuch peculiar and ſeaſonable bleſſings, we are to rank the plentiful crop which he hath beſtowed on us in all corners of the land; inſomuch, that we ſhall have no dependence on foreign nations, who might have taken advantage of our neceſſity. We ought alſo to mark, with gratitude, the providential opening of new channels of trade for all our manufactures, the demand for which has increaſed beyond our moſt ſanguine expectations, juſt in the moment when the breach with the colonies might have occaſioned a moſt dreadful calamity. Let us trace the over-ruling hand of heaven too, in the preſent peaceful diſpoſition of our potent neighbours, who ſeem to attend more to the general intereſt of Europe, than to yield to the dictates of national rivalſhip and animoſity. Let us likewiſe obſerve, with pleaſure and thankfulneſs, the alacrity and courage of our ſoldiers in the cauſe of their country, after much inſidious pains had been taken to make them cool and backward in the ſervice. Let us, with the warmeſt gratitude and praiſe, mark the ardour and ſucceſs with which they defend that antient government, which the pretended ſons of liberty

ſpurn

ſpurn at with contempt, whilſt they fly before that manly ſpirit which is its genuine product; and let us return thanks and bleſſings to the Lord of Hoſts, the God of battles, by whoſe inſpiration alone heroes and patriots are formed, *who girdeth our loins to might, and teacheth our hands to war.*

It would be highly improper, it would be impious indeed, to apply the oracle of God in the preſent caſe, and to ſay, with prophetic authority, *Go up, for to morrow the Lord will deliver them into your hands.* No; this I may not venture to ſay. The event is in the womb of providence; and *the race is not always to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong*, for God often counteracts the probability of ſecond cauſes. But this I will ſay, in oppoſition to the authors of feeble and timid counſels, that a righteous cauſe, and perſevering valour, joined to a pious truſt in the Almighty, give the beſt ground to hope for ſucceſs in war.

In the wars uſual in Europe, when rival nations have contended with each other, it has often been on points of ſmall importance, and the parties have gained nothing

thing in the end by the conteſt, but the exerciſe of arms. In ſuch wars the intereſts of mankind in general are ſafe. For that equal balance which has been maintained ſo long in the great European republic, does not admit of one nation's making large encroachments, or conqueſts, on another. But, in the preſent war, we are to retain, or loſe forever, not our new provinces, that are hardly yet a part of the ſtate, but our antient colonies, that are coeval with our navigation and commerce, thoſe great branches that are deeply engrafted into the commonwealth, which have grown with our growth, and cannot now be lopt off, without hazard that the tree ſhall thereby periſh. An object of ſuch importance requires national fortitude and perſeverance.

As Chriſtians, and as men, no doubt, we ought to wiſh and pray for peace. Every thing in the preſent caſe prompts us to ſuch a prayer; but always with this condition underſtood, that it be equitable and ſafe. How far we may hope for a return of affection and allegiance from the preſent generation of coloniſts, who are now in actual

rebellion

rebellion againſt the Britiſh government, I pretend not to ſay. God can turn the hearts of men as he pleaſes, in oppoſition to common rules. But one thing is clear and certain, that, as the ſword ſhould not be drawn againſt the ſubjects of the ſtate, without the moſt urgent neceſſity, ſo ſhould it not be ſheathed without full ſecurity and ſubmiſſion on the part of the offenders; for a peace, on any other terms, would only prove a ſhort and dangerous truce, to prepare them for a freſh revolt.

Fully employed in our own private occupations, far removed from the ſeat of war, and in perfect repoſe, we are apt to be indifferent to the intereſts of our country, and careleſs about that very government that gives us ſecurity and repoſe, till we are rouſed by ſuch a call as this, to reflect on the bleſſings we enjoy. Let us feel the generous ſpirit of Britons, riſing with juſt indignation againſt thoſe degenerate and rebellious coloniſts, who would rob us of our glory, and deſtroy that ſacred temple of the conſtitution, that can only ſecure their liberty and ours. And, as our patriotiſm

ſhould

ſhould be rouſed, ſo ſhould our loyalty; for, on this occaſion, they muſt go hand in hand together. In times of peace and tranquility, the exerciſe of this duty is not always apparent, even in the moſt faithful ſubjects. They are not called upon to perform any act of fealty; and, being at a diſtance from the ſeat of government, the perſonal qualities, and even the royal dignity of the ſovereign, ſeems to be forgotten. But, when diſturbance or danger approach, thoſe principles and affections that lay dormant, ſoon awaken with the alarm, and the moſt zealous loyalty appears in the conduct of every good citizen.

Let us now ſupport the throne, for it is ſhaken! Let us unite in warm affection to our King, whoſe character, like the ſun, ſhines the brighter for the ſpots with which faction and rebellion, for a while, have endeavoured to obſcure it. And let us demonſtrate our patriotiſm and loyalty, not by loud and empty profeſſions, but by a meek and reſpectful ſpirit to thoſe that are ſet over us, by our reverence for the laws,

laws, and thankfulneſs to heaven, that we are ſtill under their government.

Above all, let us not ſuppreſs that warlike ardour for which we have ever been diſtinguiſhed. Without magnanimity and valour, wealth and power are precarious, and wiſdom and liberty but empty names. To be ſecure, we muſt be brave. All America is now in arms; ſhall we remain feeble and unwarlike? The plough and the loom muſt be left for a while, that we may not be obliged to abandon them for ever. For, if the Almighty does not interpoſe to ſubdue the minds of our domeſtic foes, or if we do not exert our native ſtrength, in vain ſhall we think to conquer them by foreign hands. If we could, they might, perhaps, in future, learn to fear the ſeverity of a maſter, but never again would they revere the authority of a parent.

Since, then, my brethren, to yield to the claims of America would be inexpedient and diſhonourable; ſince the war is juſt and neceſſary, let us proſecute it with vigour, with chearfulneſs and perſeverance, till the rebellious children of our brother Benjamin find, that the ſame ardent national ſpirit

that could cheriſh, can alſo correct; and that the ſame powerful arm that ſtretched acroſs the Atlantic to ſave, is not now ſo weak but it can puniſh. Thus ſhall we do all in our power to preſerve to poſterity a government, the moſt favourable to human nature that ever exiſted, and to prolong the period of light, and liberty, and happineſs among mankind.

But, while we are of neceſſity at war with the children of Benjamin our brother, let us not forget the near relation they ſtand in to us; let us not entirely extinguiſh our affections to the child, becauſe he is for the preſent froward and diſobedient. Let us bend his will, but not ſubdue his ſpirit. Let us chaſtiſe him in kindneſs, *not ſlay him in anger*. Like good King David, when his ſon Abſalom rebelled againſt him, *Let us give our captains and our mighty men a charge, that they deal gently with the young man;* and, when he returns to his duty, let us receive him with open arms. AMEN.